

LUO CUSTOMS WITH REGARD TO ANIMALS (WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO CATTLE).

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STOCK TO THE LUO.

231 The Luo are both pastoral and agricultural people, and so
521 any discussion involving a group of young and old men with
regard to the relative importance of animals and crops usually
results in an endless debate. As a rule the view is unanimously
held by the elders that animals are more important to them
than crops; but the young men will often support crops, because
since the advent of Europeans to the country the Government
has introduced cash crops which are easily grown and marketed
to obtain such articles as clothes, soap, lamps, etc. The elders
on the other hand support their argument by saying that during
a very bad famine poor people die unless they become the
servants of cattle-owners who live comparatively normally
during hard times. They urge that children brought up in homes
where there is plenty of milk grow up finer and more handsome
[753] than those in homes where there is only grain. Again those
who stress the importance of animals, go so far as to say that
[511] women in poor homes develop scaly backs. Poor homes for the
Luo are homes where, no matter how much grain is stored, there
are no cattle, and women usually run away from such homes.
Strictly speaking, the word "rich," when used by a typical Jaluo,
signifies a man with a large number of stock.

231 The chief animals owned by the Luo are cattle, goats, sheep
and poultry. In discussing the importance and uses of these
animals to the people of this tribe it would probably be better
to take each of them separately.

262 Cattle produce milk which is a valuable and nourishing
food and which has other important uses besides being drunk
as such. From it the Luo make butter which is used by women
and old men for anointing their bodies. Besides this, butter
can be turned into ghee which is the favourite animal product
used in cooking. Fresh or whole milk is not drunk by the Luo
[272] unless it is mixed with a little sourmilk or buttermilk which
753 has been treated with cow urine. The reason why the milk is
not drunk pure is because it is believed that this practice is
the cause of human tapeworm infestation. Women and girls
who have passed the age of puberty do not drink milk. Stored

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difficult burden is imposed on the girls, who have to endure considerable inhibition to avoid social censure: 836
On the other hand, boys enjoy much greater freedom. 883
It would appear that this relatively stronger censure of a girl's conduct derives its strength from the anatomical evidence a woman is required to show on her day of marriage to prove her chastity. In this way it appears to be the duty of society to make sure that girls live up to the moral standards which ensure them a successful marriage. Therefore, whilst considerable intermingling is accorded to both sexes, relationships resulting in pregnancies and prostitution are discouraged. And, as has been seen, the social stigma attached to such relationships and their results comes down most heavily on the woman. [585]

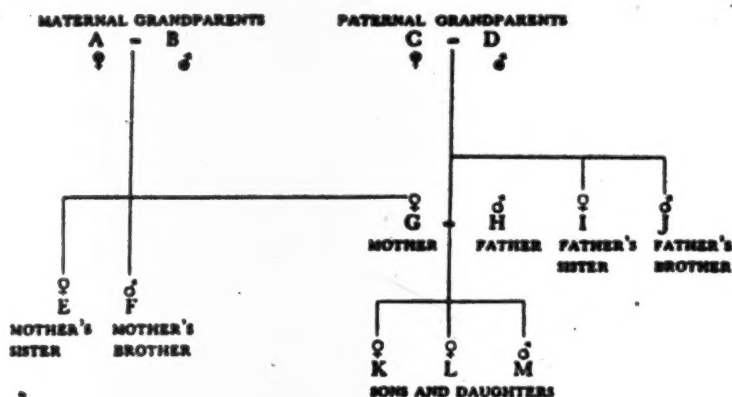
In view of the difficulties involved, the girl therefore adopts a compromise. She uses her wit as a defensive means of enabling her to enjoy the companionship of men and at the same time to help her to avoid being overcome by their reasoning. In this way, an adolescent girl who is clever at conversation is admired and considered entertaining by those men with whom she comes into contact. 836
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When there are meetings between young girls and men there is accordingly a great deal of artful conversation. Girls consider men to be full of tricks designed to trap them. Mothers also warn their growing daughters to be careful of their conduct when with the opposite sex, explaining particularly that men are not to be played with to an extent where the matter becomes serious.

When girls go about together in a group they reproach any of their number who give in to men easily. 883
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On these occasions group morality is far stronger than among those who are more individual in their attitudes. 836

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THE LUO GIRL



maternal grandparents can be traced, descendants of G-H family will not marry the person concerned.

But E may be married to H's brother and I too may marry E's brother. Should F's son wish to marry from the community in which G has been married it would be G who would take the responsibility of looking for a young woman from among the daughters of her brothers-in-law and not from among her sisters-in-law. In the same way, the sons of G's brothers-in-law cannot marry any of G's sisters or sisters by relation (daughters of her uncles). The method of acting through a relative in establishing a marriage connection is still in use, although personal initiative is increasingly taking its place.

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THE POSITION OF A BETROTHED WOMAN

The life of a betrothed woman presents a busy time of conflicting and disturbing news. Information of much discomfort to both parties comes and goes and is forgotten. To the girl such information is of great importance, and her attitude is often affected by it. Each time a

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group of girls or young women meet, there is comment on what has been said about so-and-so in certain quarters. Mixed with this unwelcome gossip may come other features of great encouragement. Thus there is much emotional strain in the years preceding marriage. It is a time when both parties to the engagement are uncertain about what may develop next. 584
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Amidst all this, the woman still has the freedom of talking to any young men she meets, and the emotional uncertainty, which is much stronger with a girl, compels her at times not to put all her hopes in one man. Although her relationship with former friends becomes relatively weak, she does not lose interest in them until she eventually gets married. A great deal of persuasion is employed. Each time she meets her friends her sympathies are tested. In this difficult period the male and female relatives of the man should play a beneficial part. Some carefully arranged marriages are broken owing to lack of such support. [152]
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In general, a betrothed woman is an object of competition. Once engaged, the forces that work against her engagement are let loose. Reports true and false are continually passed on. In the girl's family, the mother continues to instruct her on how to address the relatives whom she will meet in her new home. If the marriage is to be cancelled, the dowry paid by the first candidate must be paid back before the cattle of the other are accepted. Should the girl run away with someone else, she will, on her return, be beaten, and it is only after a long interval that the offence will be forgotten. [583]

Pre-nuptial and modern education. There is no special attempt to educate mature girls just before marriage. The nature of the training they receive is merely a continuation of that given to them in their adolescence. Thus they obtain information about their future status 584
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